



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE Head of Office in Yerevan Vladimir Pryakhin

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 28, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States also would like to welcome very warmly the Head of Office in Yerevan, Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin to the Permanent Council. We deeply appreciate all the hard work you and your Office have done across all dimensions of OSCE activities over the past seven months.

We wish to bring special attention to the Office in Yerevan's assistance in both the Constitutional and Election Reform Processes in Armenia.

On July 7, 2005, the government of Armenia submitted its revised constitutional reform amendments to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. The United States welcomes the Venice Commission's agreement to these amendments and looks forward to their adoption at the November national referendum.

One highlight of these reforms is improved separation of powers between branches of government. Another proposed amendment would create increased plurality and independence of the media and develop a fairer system for distribution of frequencies within Armenia. Such an act would be another step forward for freedom of the media, and further strengthen Armenia's commitment to this OSCE principle.

We look to the Office in Armenia to facilitate this ongoing process, including work to increase public knowledge about the referendum to aid its success. The United States stands ready to assist in this effort.

Additionally, the Office in Yerevan continues to coordinate electoral related issues. Its most recent success is the amended election code of May 19, 2005, which received expert input from ODIHR and the Venice Commission. The United States looks forward to the good-faith implementation of these reforms during the upcoming Autumn 2005 local elections and thereafter.

We welcome the Office's continued efforts to promote women's participation in local elections. The Office's recent program for 8th and 9th graders to address the importance of women in society is innovative and forward-thinking. The United States anticipates further developments in this field.

The Office in Yerevan recently presented a plan to eliminate Melange stockpiles in Armenia through environmentally sound means. After the project's planned completion

next summer, the United States looks forward to the project's experts sharing their knowledge with other countries.

In May and June of 2005, the four members of the Armenian Ombudsman's office received intensive on-the-job training from Polish and Lithuanian counterparts. On July 7, largely due to this professional training, the Office of the Armenian Ombudsman unveiled the Government of Armenia's first Human Rights website. Adoption of the new constitutional reforms will make this a permanent office within Armenia.

In the fight against corruption, the Office in Yerevan organized several seminars. Some examples include a seminar to address the operations of financial and economic institutions and another to address law enforcement institutions. The United States notes the high attendance of government officials at these seminars. Their attendance allowed direct dialogue between state officials and civil society to promote openness and transparency in the government.

The United States supports the Office's economic and environmental work done in the Syunik Region of Armenia. Of particular note is the Office's new initiative to assist small and medium-sized enterprises build capacity for free market operations.

We would like to mention the Government of Armenia's support for a new project office in Kapan, the region's capital. This project office will help develop local ownership for the initiative. This is a good example of the way the Government of Armenia supports the Office's efforts in the economic and environmental dimension.

Thank you, Ambassador Pryakhin, for speaking to us today, and for your ongoing hard work on behalf of the OSCE. We wish you and your staff continued success in Yerevan and look forward to your next report to the Permanent Council.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.